



## The Opioid Crisis & Its Effect on Families

You are not alone. By the end of this evening's program, we hope you will have learned something new about opioids, the crisis we find ourselves in today, and some of the resources available to help. But we also hope you'll think about big questions, universal questions, shared in this room, across the state and around the world, about opioids and addiction, family and society. We hope tonight's reading of *A Wider Circle* by Mary Ellen Hedrick and the discussion it inspires, will demonstrate how drama, poetry, literature, and history can connect and catalyze us to address this issue.

### Questions for Discussion

- The perception of those who consume opioids has consistently been a negative one. From the "Land of the Lotus-eaters" in Homer's *Odyssey* to Tennyson's poem "The Lotos-Eaters" to William S. Burroughs' novel *Naked Lunch* (a series of vignettes drawn from the author's own experiences with addiction), users come across as self-indulgent, lost or even obscene. (*Naked Lunch* was banned in the United States when it first came out.) The perception of those who consume opioids has consistently been a negative one. Why is this?
- What, exactly, is an opioid? Is there something inherently wrong—morally or philosophically—in the human consumption of opioids?
- Is it possible to for human beings to consume opioids without abusing them—i.e., can opioids be consumed in a "responsible" manner?
- Is the fact that opioids have historically been viewed with disdain—and the consumption of them has typically been made illegal—part of its allure? In other words, is there a kind of counter-culture attractiveness to them, an element of rebellion against convention and authority, that draws people to using opioids?
- Lost in the perception of the opioid abusers themselves is the effect of their opioid abuse on their families and friends. Who are opioid abusers? Why do they abuse opioids? And what are the effects of opioid use on the families and friends of the abusers?
- Opioids have always been considered a problem of outsiders, troubled individuals, those disconnected to society. But today this problem has become entwined with the family - grandparents raising children whose parents cannot care for them, parents feeling they have nowhere to turn for help with their children struggling with Substance Abuse Disorder, parents neglecting children, etc. What is society's responsibility to the family of origin?
- What can be done to prevent opioid abuse? Is it simply a problem that individuals have created for themselves, and therefore the solutions rest with those individuals? Or is it a problem intrinsic to human beings, therefore requiring more collaborative solutions?

